

# WATER SUPPLY LAND GRANT PROGRAM

## SECOND REPORT

June 2002 – May 2005

Prepared by The New Hampshire Department of Environmental  
Services in Accordance with RSA 486-A:9, II

May 2005



# **Water Supply Land Grant Program - Second Report**

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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

In June 2000, the Water Supply Land Grant Program (Program) was established by RSA 486-A. The program provides municipalities with 25 percent of the funds needed to permanently protect critical water supply lands.

The need for the program was documented through research funded by the NH Department of Environmental services (DES) and performed by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF). This research concluded:

- In New Hampshire, only 11 percent of the lands through which water flows to sources of public drinking water\* are protected via ownership or conservation easement; and
- Thirty nine percent of community water systems do not even own the sanitary protective radius (75' - 400') around their wells.

More recently, the American Water Works Association Research Foundation concluded, “the most effective way to ensure long-term protection of water supplies is through land ownership.”

This program, enacted under RSA 486-A, is a critical component of the State’s Drinking Water Source Protection Program. The demand for grant funding has consistently exceeded the amount of funding available for protection of water supply lands.

RSA 486-A:9, II(f) requires the preparation of a biennial report “listing all land and land rights acquired under this program, the expenditure for each acquisition, and stewardship activities...” Accordingly, this report has been prepared to fulfill this statutory obligation and to provide legislators, municipalities, and other stakeholders with an overview of the Program’s activity to date.

## **B. WATER SUPPLY LAND GRANT PROGRAM DESIGN**

The Water Supply Land Grant Program gives municipalities or non-profit water suppliers the opportunity to obtain grants for the purchase of land or conservation easements. The land must be from a willing seller and it must be within a designated source water protection area that serves a community water system or school. These grants cover up to 25 percent of total project costs, with 75 percent of the cost being matched by the entity requesting the grant.

In order for the project to qualify for this money, the deed or conservation easement must state that the land be maintained as open space. Passive dispersed recreation, forestry, and agriculture are allowed on these protected lands provided that best management

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practices are employed. The grant recipient is responsible for monitoring the land and submitting an annual monitoring report to DES program staff.

\* The SPNHF study focused only on certain areas near public water supply wells and water supply surface intake; the figures cited here do not take into account public water supply watersheds in their entirety.

DES program staff administers the program. Support for DES staff comes from funding available through the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act. This makes it possible for all state funding provided for the Land Grant Program to be used solely for the purpose of land protection.

### C. HISTORY OF THE LAND GRANT PROGRAM

During the first three years of the Land Grant Program, 2000-2003, it was funded by the Legislature at \$1.5 million annually. The program was able to provide funding for 16 different projects, which protected 3,325 acres of land. Unfortunately, budgetary concerns from July 2003 to January 2005 caused only one grant round to occur. It resulted in the funding of one 39 acre project in Dover NH.

The following is a list of all 17 projects funded through 2004.

**Note: Projects pending for spring 2005 are not included in the following chart. They are in the municipalities of Orford, Hillsboro, Newfields and Lee.**

Municipality	Acres Protected*	Grant Amount	Local Match: % Match	Year
Dover	39 acres Conservation Easement	\$92,200	\$276,600 75%	2004
Brentwood	138 acres Conservation Easement	\$143,500	\$406,000 74%	2003
Wilton	52 acres Conservation Easement	\$83,675	\$550,275 87%	2003
Stratham	20 acres Conservation Easement	\$68,348	\$205,045 75%	2003
Lee	409 acres Conservation Easement	\$360,119	\$1,080,356 75%	2002
Hollis	46 acres	\$98,769	\$295,306 75%	2002
Nashua	101 acres	\$300,000	\$466,000 75%	2002
Newmarket I	48 acres	\$121,825	\$343,175 75%	2002
Newmarket II	170 acres	\$320,937	\$992,313 75%	2002
Londonderry	187 acres	\$245,970	\$1,645,955	2002

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Hudson Windham	Conservation Easement		87%	
Brentwood	109 acres Conservation Easement	\$328,810	\$986,430 75%	2002
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Acres Protected*</b>	<b>Grant Amount</b>	<b>Local Match: % Match</b>	<b>Year</b>
Stratham	62 acres Conservation Easement	\$130,639	\$391,916 75%	2002
Hollis	95 acres Conservation Easement	\$106,838	\$320,513 75%	2002
Raymond	45 acres Conservation Easement	\$25,125	\$75,125 75%	2000
Portsmouth	193 acres	\$138,000	\$460,000 77%	2000
Nashua	295 acres	\$450,000	\$2,000,000 82%	2000
Barrington	1355 acres Conservation Easement	\$740,000	\$6,000,000 89%	2000
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,364</b>	<b>\$3,754,754 23%</b>	<b>\$16,495,008 77%</b>	

\*C.E. = conservation easement; otherwise land is protected by fee ownership.

The total amount of money spent by the program to date is \$3,754,754 to preserve 3,364 Acres of land. The State's investment has been matched by 77 percent in private funds and in-kind contributions totaling \$16,495,008. Therefore, the average amount of state investment per acre is \$1,116.

This program has shown other benefits as well. For instance, there has been wonderful cooperation between towns to protect lands for multiple purposes, which are all consistent with water supply protection.

The remaining funds from 2004 and 2005 are available and these funds will be spent in the current grant round of winter/spring 2005. Eleven applications were received for this grant round and a total of \$2,622,452 was requested by applicants. Currently the program is funded in the amount of \$587,300. We anticipate funding four projects during this round. Each of these projects is outstanding in that they protect lands immediately adjacent to community water supply wells. The funding requests are scheduled to be heard by the Governor and Council in June 2005.

### **D. PROJECTS FUNDED FROM 2002-2004**

The following projects are listed in chronological order. The first biennial report, distributed in 2002, contains the listing of the projects completed during the first two years.

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**HOLLIS** – This project protects 95 acres of land with a conservation easement in the water supply protection areas for Merrimack Village District and Pennichuck Water Works. This parcel helps protect a wellhead in Merrimack and an intake on Supply Pond for Pennichuck Water Works. It also provides a water recharge area for Witches Spring Brook and Pennichuck Brook Aquifer. The land is used for passive recreation and allows for the use of non-motorized wheeled vehicles.

**STRATHAM** – This project resulted in the protection of 62-acres of land with a conservation easement within the Town of Exeter's intake on the Exeter River. It is also located upland of Skinner's source water protection area for the Spring Aquifer, used by Exeter as a source of drinking water. This tract of land is used for passive recreation. The natural woodlands have trails, and a forestry management plan has been developed.

**BRENTWOOD** – The 109-acre conservation easement (four separate parcels) acquired through this project protects land within the source water protection areas for the Town of Exeter's intake and the Swasey Central School's well. The 4 properties contain mixed forest communities and hayfields. The land is used for passive recreation and will be kept in its natural state with trails for public access.

**LONDONDERRY/HUDSON/WINDHAM** – This project protects 187 acres of land (three separate parcels) with a conservation easement. It is part of the land surrounding the wells for a community water system and a school. The land consists of mostly forest with some forested wetlands. The land is used for active and passive recreation.

**NEWMARKET I** – This project protects 170 acres of land with a conservation easement. It is within the source water protection area for the Town of Newmarket's river intake. The land consists of fields, forests and wetlands. It has a prime wetland that drains into the Lamprey and Piscassic Rivers. The land is used for passive recreation, including hiking, hunting, fishing, sledding, snowmobiling and nature viewing.

**NEWMARKET II** – This project protects 48 acres of land. It is within a wellhead protection area for the Town of Newmarket and it has 1,900 feet of frontage on the Piscassic River. The land consists of river frontage, hayfields and forests. There are 16 acres of prime farmland soils on this property. The land is used for passive recreation such as hiking, cross-country skiing, hunting and fishing.

**NASHUA** – This project protects 101 acres (three parcels) of land located in the source water protection area for the Pennichuck Water Works water supply. The land consists of wetlands, uplands of mature mixed forest, and open space. The land is used for passive recreation.

**HOLLIS** – This project protects 46 acres of land within the source water protection area for the Pennichuck Water Works water supply. It provides clean recharge and buffering protection for the Pennichuck Aquifer, Pennichuck Brook and Pennichuck Pond. The land consists of wetlands with a softwood and hardwood forest in the upland. The land is

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used for passive recreation, including low-use snowmobile and horse trails consistent with water supply protection.

**LEE** – This project resulted in the acquisition of a 14-acre parcel of land and conservation easements on 395 acres of land within the source water protection areas for the towns of Durham and Newmarket, and the University of New Hampshire wells and intakes. The land consists of brush/transitional forest, forested wetland, forest, agricultural and open fields. The land is used for passive recreation.

**STRATHAM** – This project protects, through a conservation easement, 20 acres of land within the source water protection area for wells that provide water to Hampton. The land lies adjacent to Winnicut Mills Pond and contains a tributary to the Winnicut River. It contains partially cropped fields and it is partially forested. It is also adjacent to an aquifer and contains soils of prime importance.

**WILTON** – This project protects 52 acres of land with a conservation easement. The land is within the source water protection areas for two schools. The land consists of a hayfield, a forest and some agricultural fields. It will continue to be used as a dairy and vegetable community supported agriculture farm.

**BRENTWOOD** – This project protects 138 acres of land (four separate parcels) with a conservation easement. The land is within the source water protection area for the Town of Exeter's water supply intake on the Exeter river. The land consists of a mixed forest community along the Exeter River Corridor. There is 9,000 feet of frontage on the Exeter River and it will link over 350 acres of permanently protected lands.

**DOVER** – This project protects 39 acres through conservation easements (two separate parcels). The land is within one of the source water protection areas for the City of Dover's well fields. The land consists of a mined gravel area, a wooded area along the Bellamy River, and an open field.

## F. PROGRAM OUTREACH

Currently, 63.5 percent of New Hampshire's population relies on public drinking water supplies. The Water Supply Land Grant program is available to municipalities and non-profit organizations having water supply as their principal mission. Accordingly, the focus of DES's outreach efforts is on encouraging and assisting municipalities applying for grants.

Outreach consists of providing potential applicants with information about the benefits of permanent protection of critical water supply lands including the avoidance of remediation costs. Outreach also includes technical assistance with all elements of the pre-application and application process.

With limited staff and budgetary uncertainty from July 2003 through January 2005, outreach has been on an "as requested" basis. Tracking of properties has been through monitoring reports received from landowners.

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### G. CONCLUSION

The Water Supply Land Grant Program has been successful in protecting over 3,300 acres of critical water supply lands since its inception in June of 2000. Assisting municipalities in protecting water supply lands and ensuring good stewardship of these lands has been and will continue to be the primary focus of this program.

According to a recent report published by the Trust for Public Lands and the American Water Works Association in the *Source Protection Handbook*: “Land conservation emphasizes the permanent preservation of land around both groundwater sources (aquifer recharge areas and wellheads) and surface water sources (land that buffers streams, rivers, and lakes). It’s an extremely effective tool that can protect public health, [and] prevent increased treatment costs... in areas where water supplies are protected.”

The program is building on its past successes by attracting a high quality of project that is focused on protecting land around drinking water supplies. It has made important connections with the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program and other land preservation organizations in order to maximize protection efforts. The Program’s goal is to protect as much critical water supply land as possible and ensure an adequate supply of good quality drinking water in the future. Ongoing funding for this program is critical in achieving lasting protection of our municipal water supplies.

For additional information concerning New Hampshire’s Water Supply Land Grant Program contact Karla McManus, NH Department of Environmental Services, (603) 271-3114 or <a href="mailto:kmcmanus@des.state.nh.us">kmcmanus@des.state.nh.us</a> .
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